1977

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INTRODUCTION

Aristotle, writing in the fourth century B.C., defined rhetoric as the "faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle, 1932, 1:2). He then proceeded to classify proofs intrinsic to the art of speaking into three modes–*logos, ethos,* and *pathos.* Consistent with his "scientific" point of view, he deplored writers of the arts of speaking who ignored argument; and his treatise emphasized the logical element in persuasion. As he said, persuasion is "effected by the arguments, when we demonstrate the truth, real or apparent, by such means as inhere in particular cases" (Aristotle, 1:2). That the purpose of much public, popular discourse throughout the ages has been to persuade or convince is obvious. However, the question of how the speaker or writer is to establish belief in his proposition and, in addition, appeal to the emotional and imaginative side of his audience has offered much scope for theorizing among rhetoricians. Naturally, as conceptions of human knowledge and human nature changed, theories of suasory discourse changed, too. Not all later rhetoricians agreed with Aristotle that enthymematic reasoning formed the body and substance of persuasion.

The ancient-rhetorical notion of *enargeia* (clearness, distinctness, vividness), however, played a very influential role in many theoretical discussions among later thinkers. Literary critics and aestheticians also considered *enargeia* as a quality of writing that could arouse emotions and give aesthetic pleasure. Finally, *enargeia* was revived by Descartes and the Cartesians as a criterion of truth and played a prominent role in philosophic discussions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

ENARGEIA IN RHETORICAL AND LITERARY THEORY

The Greeks were the first to offer a theory of imaginative appeal which, they thought, could produce the desired response in a listener or reader. Although Aristotle stressed the enthymeme as an engine of persuasion, he was keenly aware of the functional, rhetorical effect of language on listeners. In Book III of the *Rhetoric,* he considers linguistic devices which promote vivid description and lively or popular sayings. He claims that audiences like words "that set an event before their eyes; for they must see the thing occurring now, not hear of it as in the future. In style, accordingly, the speaker must aim at these three points: Metaphor, Antithesis, Actuality" (Aristotle, 3:10). Metaphors, he claims, give liveliness and vividness to composition. He puts particular emphasis on placing objects before the mind's eye as though they were living and moving. He writes, "But we have still to explain what is meant by setting things 'before the eyes,' and how this is to be affected. What I mean is, using expressions that show things in a state of activity. It is a metaphor, indeed, to say that a good man is 'four-square,' . . . but the metaphor suggests no activity. There is, on the other hand, a sense of activity in the expression 'with his vigor fully blooming' " (Aristotle, 3:11). Thus, we find in the Aristotelian treatment of rhetorical style an emphasis on linguistic devices which promote vivid description and a lively or vivid representation of the facts. The orator is to set things before the audience's eyes; he is to paint verbal pictures.

The great Roman rhetorician, Quintillian (1960, 6.2: 29-30), clearly stated the relationship between vivid description (or *enargeia*) and emotional arousal which also contributes to belief in the reality or actuality of the scene being described.

> But how are we to generate these emotions in ourselves, since emotion is not in our own power? I will try to explain as best I may. There are certain experiences . . . the Romans [call] visions, whereby things absent are present to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes. It is the man who is really sensitive to such impressions who will have the greatest power over the emotions. . . . This power of vivid imagination, whereby things, words and actions are presented in the most realistic manner . . . is a power which all may readily acquire if they will. When the mind is unoccupied or is absorbed by fantastic hopes or daydreams, we are haunted by these visions of which I am speaking to such an extent that we imagine that we are traveling abroad, crossing the sea, fighting, addressing the people, or enjoying the use of wealth that we do not actually possess, and seem to ourselves not to be dreaming but acting. Surely, then, it may be possible to turn this form of hallucination to some profit.

And in a later passage Quintilian (1960, 6.2:32) writes: "From such impressions arises that *enargeia* which Cicero calls *illumination* and *actuality*, which make us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence." Although Quintilian is pointing to the emotional efficacy of clear and vivid word pictures, he also relates *enargeia* to illumination and actuality.

Next, I would like to turn to another great Greek critic, probably of the same century as Quintilian, whose writings belong to the poetic as well as the rhetorical tradition–i.e., Longinus. In the fifteenth chapter of *On the Sublime*, Longinus talks of *enargeia*. He is discussing the second of his five sources of sublimity, viz., vehement and inspired passion. Longinus (1962:2) says that in his time the word imagination

> has now come to be used predominantly of passages where, inspired by strong emotion, you seem to see what you describe and bring it vividly before the eyes of your audience. That imagination means one thing in oratory and another in poetry you will yourself detect, and also that the object of poetry is to enthrall, of prose writing to present things vividly, though both aim at this latter and at excited feeling.

After citing some examples from poetry which "show a romantic exaggeration, far exceeding the limits of credibility," Longinus says that the proper use of imagination in oratory is to convince the audience of the "reality and truth" of the speaker's assertions. He quotes passages from Demosthenes where, he claims, imagination persuades by going beyond argument: "When combined with argumentative treatment," it not only convinces the audience, "it positively masters them" (Longinus, 15:9).

From these few passages in Aristotle, Quintilian, and Longinus, then, it is clear that the ancient rhetoricians advocated the vivid description of objects, persons, scenes, or events in discourse. Such concrete verbal portraits, they thought, could serve at least four important functions: (1) they aroused the emotions and the passions; (2) they created aesthetic enjoyment; (3) they helped to hold attention and interest; and, finally, (4) they even contributed to *belief*. Lively and vividly descriptive language can raise the ideas of the imagination to almost the same vividness of sense impressions. *Enargeia* can "almost compel the audience to see what . . . [the author] imagined" (Longinus, 15:3).

Naturally, in poetic and rhetorical discourse, it is by the proper use of language–particularly figurative language–that the writer or speaker must seek to raise the imaginative description to the vividness of actual sense perception. Certain figures were recommended in rhetorical treatises as particularly important for such purposes–metaphor, simile, vision, and ocular demonstration. In Lane Cooper's translation of Aristotle (1932) there are two figures which are derived from the Greek doctrine of *enargeia: descriptio* or vivid description; and *demonstratio* or ocular demonstrations: "when an event is so described in words that the business seems to be enacted and the subject to pass vividly before our eyes."

Although the notion of vivid description seems to have originated with the rhetoricians, it was later to become firmly entrenched in poetic theory, too. One reason for the popularity of descriptive passages in poetry, no doubt, was the Latin notion of *ut pictura poesis*. Horace had said that poetry is like painting, and most Renaissance literary critics repeated the cliché that poetry is like a picture. Because of this parallel between the arts, it was common to describe the poet's (or rhetorician's) task in language in terms of painting. If the verbal arts are similar to painting, then they should be speaking pictures. Thus, the imagery of color came into discussions of poetic and rhetorical compositions. Writers and speakers were urged to "paint in living colors," or to "paint before the eyes," with verbal portraits.

From the time of the early Greeks and Romans, the advice to speakers and writers was to paint before the eyes of the audience with clear, distinct, and vivid, verbal portraits. These commonplaces about the importance of ocular demonstration were repeated throughout the Renaissance and the seventeenth century in almost all treatises on rhetoric and poetry. The doctrine of vivid description was very popular in the eighteenth century. An index to how widespread the notion was can be found in the following passage from Reid (1969:397-98):

> It seems easier to form a lively conception of objects that are familiar, than of those that are not; our conceptions of visible objects are commonly the most lively, when other circumstances are equal. Hence, poets not only delight in the description of visible objects, but find means by metaphor, analogy, and allusion, to clothe every object they describe with visible qualities. The lively conception of these makes the object to appear, as it were, before our eyes. Lord Kames, in his Elements of Criticism, has shown of what importance it is in works of taste, to give to objects described, what he calls *ideal presence*. To produce this in the mind, is indeed the capital aim of poetical and rhetorical description. It carries the man, as it were, out of himself, and makes him a spectator of the scene described. This ideal presence seems to me to be nothing else but a lively conception of the appearance which the object would make if really present to the eye.

ENARGEIA IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Having discussed what might be called the rhetorical and aesthetic aspects of the doctrine of *enargeia,* I would now like to consider what might be called the epistemological dimension of this term and its synonyms. I have already mentioned that, even among ancient rhetoricians, vivid description was considered one device to convince the audience of the reality and truth of the orator's statements and to persuade an audience by getting them to "see before their eyes" what the speaker wants them to believe.

Although Descartes is often considered the father of modern philosophy, some recent writers have considered his system as an attempt to overthrow the doubts of the Sceptics. Descartes proceeded with his method of doubt to look for an indubitable truth, which he found in his famous *Cogito, ergo sum.* By inspecting this one truth, Descartes finds the criterion of truth. He comes to the conclusion that there is nothing in the proposition "I think, therefore I am" which assures him of the truth except that he sees very clearly and distinctly what is affirmed. Descartes (1965:29) wrote: "Certainly in this first knowledge there is nothing that assures me of its truth, excepting the clear and distinct perception of that which I state. . . . And accordingly it seems to me that already I can establish as a general rule that all things which I perceive very clearly and very distinctly are true." The *cogito* strikes us so strongly with its clarity and distinctness that we cannot doubt it–it carries its own evidence with it or is self-evident. (It is interesting to note that Cicero used the Latin word *evidentia* for the Greek *enargeia.*)

Descartes' opponents, of course, often attacked his system on the matter of clear and distinct truths. "A central theme of these criticisms [of Gassendi and Mersenne] is to question whether the fact that Descartes claimed to be certain, to perceive clearly and distinctly that the propositions he advanced were true, sufficed to make them true. Perhaps, they suggested, in spite of how Descartes felt about these propositions, it might still be the case that they were false" (Popkin, 1964:204). In a note to the article on "Pyrrho" in Bayle's *Dictionary,* Popkin (1965:199) remarks: "In seventeenth-century discussions, *l'evidence* is the mark of truth, which, when present, makes it impossible to doubt a proposition. In Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1727 ed.) the following entries are offered to explain the meaning of *l'evidence*: 'Manifest certainty, the quality of things that makes them clearly visible and knowable, as much to the body's eyes as to its mind. The consent which arises from *l'evidence* of a thing is more unshakeable than that which faith exacts (Huet). One has to accept *l'evidence,* which cannot be resisted as soon as it makes itself felt in us (Le Clerc). . . .'"

In these passages it is clear that *l'evidence* is a synonym for *enargeia,* derived, of course, from Cicero's rendering of that Greek term with the Latin *evidentia. L'evidence* is shorthand for the clear and distinct ideas of reason which are incontrovertibly true.

Following Descartes, Leibniz, and Wolff, the Continental rationalists (and many English writers, too) continually propounded the notion of clear and distinct ideas. Sometimes, as in Descartes, the "clear and distinct" ideas of reason were separated from the "obscure and confused" ideas of sense. Most of the popular logics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included long discussions of the nature of clear, distinct, and vivid ideas.

In Germany, Leibniz and Wolff constructed a whole chart of ideas. "Knowledge is either *obscure* or *clear*; clear ideas again are either *indistinct* or *distinct*; distinct ideas are either *adequate* or *inadequate, symbolic* or *intuitive*; perfect knowledge, finally, is that which is both *adequate* and *intuitive*" (Leibniz, *in* Wiener, 1951:283). According to these philosophers, if we follow the proper procedure, we progress from obscure and confused ideas to clear and distinct ideas. This progress from *"dunckeler Begrif"* to *"klarer Begrif"* provided the often overlooked technical meaning for the origin of the term "Enlightenment." As we move from "dark" to "clear" concepts, we use the light of reason to enlighten our knowledge.

A quotation from a popular French book on logic, that was also translated into English, will reveal all of the common synonyms for *enargeia* used in a brief passage. Jean Pierre de Crousaz (1724, 2:3) wrote:

> The Distinction of Ideas into *clear* and *obscure, distinct* and *confused,* offers itself first. And indeed it is one of the most usual and important Distinctions. . . . Every Idea is an Act, which perceives itself; and therefore it has essentially some Life and some Activity; it affects us with some Force. Since it is known and perceived, it has some Clearness, some Evidence. . . . I grant that all our Ideas do not discover to us their Objects with the same Clearness and the same Exactness. . . . Wherefore every Idea has essentially some Clearness and some Distinctness; but the most lively, that is, those which are best perceived, are the clearest, and for that reason the most distinct. We distinguish more easily what makes a more lively Impression upon us, because it raises a greater Attention. Thus Clearness and Distinctness are two different Characters; but one of them is always a Consequence of the other.

In this passage, clearness, distinctness, vividness, and evidence are all variations on our old rhetorical term, *enargeia.* Force and liveliness are two terms that were often used as substitutes for vividness.

If we turn to the British philosophers of the eighteenth century, we will find that they, too, used the Cartesian cri-

terion in a modified form, but applied it to sense impressions rather than intellectual concepts. Hume (1888:1) was very concerned with trying to differentiate between impressions and ideas. The very first paragraph of his *Treatise* begins:

> All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and with which they strike upon the mind and make their way into our thought or consciousness.

In Hume's analysis there are three kinds of perceptions; they are differentiated by their force, vivacity, or liveliness. Sensations are the most vivid; ideas of memory have less vivacity; and ideas of the imagination are the least vivid. "And as an idea of memory, by losing its force and vivacity, may degenerate to such a degree as to be taken for an idea of the imagination; so on the other hand an idea of the imagination may acquire such a force and vivacity as to pass for an idea of the memory. . . ." (Hume, 1888:86).

In discussing the different force of ideas, Hume also reverts to the term "distinct" and the imagery of color so familiar to us. " 'Tis evident at first sight, that the ideas of the memory are much more lively and strong than those of the imagination, and that the former faculty paints its object in more distinct colours, than any which are employ'd by the latter" (Hume, 1888:9).

Hume's definition of belief or assent is dependent on his adaptation of the Cartesian criterion of truth. "Thus it appears, that the belief or assent, which always attends the memory and senses, is nothing but the vivacity of those perceptions they present; and that this alone distinguishes them from the imagination" (Hume, 1888:86). Hume states his definition of belief as follows:

> When you wou'd any way vary the idea of a particular object, you can only increase or diminish its force and vivacity. . . . An opinion, therefore, or belief may be most accurately defin'd, A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION (Hume, 1886: 96).

Hume, obviously, felt some discomfort with his definition of belief as consisting in the vivacity of ideas. In an appendix to the *Treatise,* Hume (1888:628) adds the following corrective passage:

> This operation of the mind, which forms the belief in any matter of fact, seems hitherto to have been one of the greatest mysteries of philosophy. . . . For my part I must own, that I find a considerable difficulty in the case. . . . I am at a loss to express my meaning. . . . An opinion or belief is nothing but an idea, that is different from a fiction, not in the nature, or the order of its parts, but in the *manner* of its being conceiv'd. But when I wou'd explain this *manner,* I scarce find any word that fully answers the case. . . . An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea, that the fancy alone presents to us. And this different feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior force, or vivacity, or solidity, or firmness or steadyness. . . . And in philosophy we can go no farther, than assert, that it is something *felt* by the mind, which distinguishes the ideas of the judgment from the fictions of the imagination.

It seems that the young Scotsman was unaware that his solution to "one of the greatest mysteries of philosophy" was a very old one indeed. Both the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers had assumed that all knowledge came from sense perceptions. Epicurus "has *aisthesis* serve as the guarantor of its own validity, and this by reason of its clear and self-evident nature (*enargeia* . . .)" (Peters, 1967:52). When Hume compares the greater vividness of ideas assented to with the less vivid fictions of the imagination, he has returned to the old criterion of *enargeia.*

Hume's opponent, Reid (1969:618) could not agree with Hume that "to believe in the existence of anything, is nothing else than to have a strong and lively conception of it." But in his attempt to combat Hume's scepticism, Reid argued for a large class of intuitive judgments or propositions that need no argument to support them. These intuitive judgments or self-evident principles, he often refers to as the principles of Common Sense. Reid admits that since the time of Descartes, philosophers have tried to get along with as few self-evident judgments as possible. He was convinced, however, that the classes of intuitive judgments had to be widened in order to combat Hume's scepticism. In describing some of the principles of common sense, Reid (1969:559) claims that they have *l'evidence* and therefore do not need to be proven: "All knowledge, and all science, must be built upon principles that are self-evident; and of such principles, every man who has common sense is a competent judge when he conceives them distinctly." In discussing some of the first principles that he introduces directly to combat his interpretation of Hume's scepticism, Reid uses variation of distinctness as a criterion of truth. To guarantee the testimony of memory, Reid (1969:622) relies on the first principle, "that those things did really happen which I distinctly remember." The existence of objects in the world and veridical perception is assured by the first principle that "those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our sense, and are what we perceive them to be" (Reid, 1969:625).

It is rather ironic that philosophers of such differing outlooks and with such different philosophies as Descartes, Hume, and Reid all used concepts derived from the old rhetorical and philosophical term *enargeia.* No doubt, one could

write a long history of this idea as Lovejoy did on the Great Chain of Being, or Monk did on The Sublime. Suffice it to say that *enargeia* played a significant role in rhetoric, poetry, and philosophy. In poetic theory, vivid descriptions were advocated by literary theorists because they provided aesthetic pleasure, commanded attention, operated on the emotions, and were longer remembered. In rhetorical theory, orators were enjoined to set things before the audience's eyes, to paint in living colors, to describe vividly, and to give an ocular demonstration of the facts. The goal, of course, was not only to hold the hearer's attention and interest or to arouse the emotions, but also to get the audience to see and believe the speaker's proposition. Among philosophers, the various synonyms and derivatives of *enargeia* were often used as criteria for truth or belief.

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